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MA ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS SECRETARY HERZFELDER, PUBLIC, PRIVATE PARTNERS CELEBRATE FUNDING FOR WESTPORT AQUACULTURE PROGRAM

Westport - Environmental Affairs Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder today announced the release of \$67,000 to the Town of Westport to expand and enhance its municipal shellfish aquaculture and resource enhancement programs.

“Today is a great day for shellfish harvesters in Westport and for everyone who enjoys this magnificent resource,” said Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder. “I am pleased to be making this investment in Westport’s continued commitment to shellfish aquaculture. This announcement was the result of a years-long effort by local, private and public partners, and is both an environmental and economic success story.”

In 2002, legislative authorization provided funds for the development of Westport’s aquaculture program and this announcement signals the release of these funds. Westport’s Shellfish Department has developed unique resource management programs and has hosted projects that have created greater public awareness and support for the development and implementation of shellfish aquaculture on a public and private level.

“Early on, the Town of Westport recognized the many opportunities created by effective shellfish resource management strategies, and is now better equipped to expand their very creative and unique projects,” said Massachusetts Commissioner of Food & Agriculture Douglas Gillespie. “Westport has created some great public/private collaborations that provide economic development opportunities appropriate for the rural and agricultural characteristics of the area.”

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Funding will be reserved in a dedicated account for project activities and dispersed over a three-year contract period to support four key project areas: Westport shellfish hatchery development and operation, the development and implementation of a shellfish resource management/aquaculture development plan, shellfish resource enhancement programs and an educational program.

State Representative Michael J. Rodrigues commented, “Recreational and commercial shellfishing has long been a vital component to the economy and identity of Westport. It was easy for me to understand the importance of ensuring that Westport’s Shellfish Constable Gary Sherman and his dedicated team had the resources to ensure that shellfishing thrives in the Westport River for years to come.”

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